

Message Text

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TAGS: ECON, ELAB, EEC

SUBJECT: EC REGIONAL FUND

REF: A) EC BRUSSELS 679 B) EC BRUSSELS 266

1. SUMMARY: PERMREP AND EC COMMISSION CONTACTS SAID SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS WAS MADE AT THE FEBRUARY 6 COREPER MEETING ON THE EC REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND. THE FEB. 10-11 COUNCIL IS EXPECTED TO DECIDE THE TWO OR THREE MAJOR ISSUES REMAINING AND IT IS HOPED THAT FINAL COUNCIL APPROVAL WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE COUNCIL MEETING ON MARCH 3-4. END SUMMARY.

2. ON FEB. 6 THE COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES (COREPER) WORKED LATE INTO THE NIGHT TRYING TO RESOLVE THE MANY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE MEMBER STATES ON GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE EC REGIONAL FUND THAT HAD APPEARED IN THE COURSE OF MEETINGS OF THE ECONOMIC WORKING GROUP. (REFTELS DESCRIBE SOME, BUT NOT ALL, OF THE DIFFERENCES, WHICH CAN BE DESCRIBED SCHEMATICALLY AS (A) THE UK, FRANCE, AND ITALY WANTING MINIMUM CONTROL FROM BRUSSELS AND (B) GERMANY, THE NETHERLANDS, AND DENMARK WANTING MORE STRINGENT RULES AND GREATER COMMUNITY CONTROL OVER REGIONAL

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FUND AID). A CONTACT IN THE UK PERMANENT

DELEGATION, WHO SAT THROUGH THE COREPER MARATHON, SAID THAT MUCH PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE. HE TOLD US THAT THE UK WAS SATISFIED WITH THE WORK ACCOMPLISHED AND THAT THERE WAS AN EFFORT ON ALL SIDES TO BE HELPFUL. THE FRENCH, ACCORDING TO OUR CONTACT, AGREED TO DROP THE LINKAGE BETWEEN THE REGIONAL FUND RULES AND GUIDELINES FOR THE HARMONIZATION OF NATIONAL REGIONAL AIDS (SEE REFTEL B). THE FRENCH WANT RAPID AGREEMENT ON THE LATTER BUT ARE NOT MAKING IT A CONDITION PRECEDENT TO REGIONAL FUND AGREEMENT. A GERMAN CONTACT WHO WAS AT THE MEETING DESCRIBED PROGRESS AS REMARKABLE WITH MOST OUTSTANDING ISSUES HAVING BEEN RESOLVED.

3. A CONTACT IN THE CABINET OF COMMISSIONER THOMSON, THE EC COMMISSIONER RESPONSIBLE FOR REGIONAL POLICY, WAS ALSO QUITE PLEASED WITH THE COREPER MEETING. HE SAID THE BRITISH HAD WITHDRAWN A LONG LIST OF "WRECKING" AMENDMENTS. HE ANTICIPATED THAT THE REGIONAL FUND RULES WOULD MOST LIKELY BE BROAD ENOUGH TO COVER THE SYSTEM OF REGIONAL INVESTMENT AID THAT IS PECULIAR TO THE UK. THE HOPED-FOR SCENARIO FOR THE REGIONAL FUND DEBATE IS AS FOLLOWS:

A) THE EC COUNCIL MEETING OF FEB. 10-11 WILL RESOLVE THE TWO OR THREE MAJOR OUTSTANDNG ISSUES.

B) THE EC COUNCIL WORKING GROUP AND COREPER WILL PUT THE FINAL DRAFT DIRECTIVES IN SHAPE DURING THE FOLLOWING TWO WEEKS.

C) THE EC COUNCIL WILL ROUTINELY APPROVE THE DRAFT DIRECTIVES AT ITS MEETING ON MARCH 3-4.

5. ACCORDING TO OUR COMMISSION CONTACT THE UK SAID THAT IT WOULD PROBABLY BE APPROPRIATE TO HOLD A PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON THE DRAFT DIRECTIVES. HE SAID THAT HE EXPECTED THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT WOLD APPROVE A GOVERNMENT MOTION ON THE DRAFT DIRECTIVES WITHOUT ANY DIFFICULTY.
GREENWALD

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